

Speech from the Throne Province of Nova Scotia

Thursday, October 7, 1999



His Honour
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Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia

For the First Session of the Fifty-Eighth General Assembly
NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

I am pleased to welcome our families, friends, and guests. Indeed, I welcome all Nova Scotians to this historic House, the birthplace of responsible government in our nation.

As is customary, we pause for a moment to remember those who are no longer with us, but who made lasting contributions to our province and deserve our gratitude on this day.

Doug Giles was a friend to many of us in this House. We will miss his aid, comfort, and friendship as we conduct the people's business.

Fisher Hudson served his country in time of war as an air force navigator, and his province in time of peace as a member of the Executive Council.

We note with regret that the voice of Robert Lindsay, known for his eloquence in this House as well his harmonious tones as a singer, has been silenced.

We extend our sympathies to their families.

Building on Strong Values

While we respect and honour the traditions and heritage of this noble institution, our commitment to Nova Scotians is that, from this day forward, government in this province will be very different.

It is the belief of this government that Nova Scotians are prepared to embrace a new set of values and principles as the basis for a new relationship with their government.

That belief is based upon the honest recognition that government cannot, and should not, attempt to be all things to all people.

It is rooted in the understanding that all authority vested in government comes from the people. The people therefore, individually and in communities, must be permitted and encouraged to share in the deliberations, the decisions, and the responsibilities that come with governance.



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Government must be there in times of need. Government must meet the highest standard in delivery of certain vital, well-defined public services.

But government must also know its place. Government must respect the right of Nova Scotians to direct their own lives and chart their own futures.

Government must encourage a strong private sector economy where individual initiative and the courage to take risks are rewarded.

Government must live within its means and ensure that Nova Scotians get the maximum benefit from every tax dollar spent.

Government must also respect the right of peaceable, law-abiding individuals to go about their lives. Government must recognize the right of legitimate enterprise to go about its business.

This government believes that in the final analysis self-reliance and personal responsibility are the keys to building strong families, strong communities, and a better province.

These beliefs represent a philosophical change in governance for this province. These beliefs establish the principles that will guide us through the next four years as we work with Nova Scotians to achieve our goals.

This government realizes it faces difficult choices, but it also sees great new opportunities and exciting challenges for Nova Scotians and Nova Scotia.

This government has confidence that, together, Nova Scotians can and will meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Building a Healthier Province

Our first goal must, by definition, be our first priority. That goal is to build a healthy society.

This means an approach to health care that spans our lives, from early intervention programs to long-term-care beds.

Nova Scotians must know that their health comes first and that responsibility for ensuring good health rests with them, as well as with the health system.

Neither individuals nor governments can simply buy good health by pouring money into the system. We have learned that hard and expensive lesson over the last six years.

Investments in health care must be timely and strategic in order to minimize costs and maximize results.

- This government will meet its commitment to deliver better health care to its citizens and to achieve greater value from every dollar spent on health care.
- This government will establish a single-entry system for assessing the care needs of Nova Scotians and for delivering health care tailored to meet those needs.
- This government will meet its commitment to invest in wellness and disease prevention.
- This government will meet its commitment to establish the position of Health Care Advocate to work with caregivers in identifying interventions that make sense both for individuals with exceptional medical needs and for the system as a whole.
- This government will ensure that accountability is tied to authority.
- This government will meet its commitment to measure outcomes and redirect resources away from failed approaches and into proven successes.
- This government will meet its commitment to invest in new information technologies in order to reduce duplication and speed the delivery of care.

This government knows that paper cannot be used to bind wounds, nor ink used as medicine. Where choices need to be made we will invest in hands that heal.



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- Our commitment to provide 100 full-time nurses, or equivalent, within six months of assuming office will be met.

Nova Scotians must be confident that steps are being taken to preserve their health care system for the future, and this means securing the services of tomorrow's health care professionals.

- This government will meet the commitment to secure nurses for the future by providing bursaries to students who remain in Nova Scotia.
- This government will meet its commitment to establish the position of Nursing Policy Advisor to work with the profession in bringing about a positive work environment where nurses know they are valued.
- This government will meet its commitment to secure physicians for the future by providing medical bursaries to students who commit to practising in under-serviced areas.
- This government will introduce legislation governing the responsibilities and duties of various health professionals.
- And in keeping with our belief that families also offer hands that heal, your government will immediately move to enhance respite services for those who provide care at home.

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing government is restoring Nova Scotians' confidence in their health system.

This government believes that as long as caregivers, communities, and volunteers are shut out of the decision-making process we will fail to meet our goal of building a truly responsive, efficient, and affordable system.

While we recognize the need for regional co-operation and planning, government firmly believes that both can be accomplished without alienating communities or adding another layer to the bureaucracy through regional health boards.

The system will be changed, but unlike in the past, it will be done in a planned, thoughtful, and step-wise fashion.

- This government will proceed with our commitment to legislate the roles and responsibilities of community health boards and eliminate the existing regional health board structure.

This government also believes that all of its citizens should have equitable access to core clinical services and that standards must be applied.

This government will, through the Provincial Health Council, hold public discussions on these two critical initiatives. Preparations are well under way, and this government will meet its commitment.

These steps represent only our early efforts to support the most valuable asset in our health care system—the caregivers themselves.

These steps begin the initiative of supporting Nova Scotians who take a greater stake in their own well-being and that of their families.

And they lay the foundations for ensuring that Nova Scotians will have a health care system that provides what they need, in times of need.



Rebuilding Our Economy

The second goal for our government is to reassert Nova Scotia's position as the leading economic force in Atlantic Canada and a force to be reckoned with nationally and internationally.

This government is dedicated to ensuring that Nova Scotia offers a business climate that encourages individual initiative and entrepreneurial spirit.

This government believes that there must be clearly defined policies for supporting business and job growth. We will work with business in establishing binding principles for attracting new investment to Nova Scotia.

- We will encourage business, and small business in particular, by freeing the business environment of unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles. We will meet our commitment to establish a Red Tape Commissioner.
- This government will meet its commitment to the reasonable and orderly divestiture of public business enterprises in favour of private sector involvement.

Government should not try to direct or control the natural economic growth of the province.

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It must support entrepreneurial efforts through strategic investments in infrastructure, training, and marketing. We must also recognize the importance of our traditional resources—forestry, agriculture, and fishing.

- Over the next few months this government will initiate discussions with the federal government to secure an agreement on sustainable forestry practices, which will ensure that our forests are a renewable asset for future generations.
- This government recognizes the importance of helping young farmers and will meet its commitment to provide relief from the high cost of borrowing.
- This government has met, and will continue to meet, its commitment to pursue the federal government on the issue of treating Nova Scotia farmers fairly and equitably through a farm drought program.
- This government will meet its commitment to demonstrate leadership in supporting Nova Scotia's entrepreneurial spirit by developing Nova Scotia Brand and Buy Nova Scotia programs, which will extend and enhance our image in the marketplace.

Nova Scotia is enjoying an economic renaissance as it enters the 21st century, and government must capitalize on new industries and economic enablers such as information technology, bio-medical research, and the oil and gas sector.

- We will meet our commitment to establish a Technology Council with members from business and post-secondary institutions to promote technological change while improving productivity and quality.

The emerging oil and gas industry has yet to hit critical mass in Nova Scotia, but it holds the potential to transform many sectors of the economy by providing a secure source of clean energy, in addition to spin off industries and direct and indirect jobs.

This government is dedicated to ensuring that each stage in the building and development of a gas and oil industry maximizes benefits for Nova Scotians.

- We will fulfil our commitment to establish an Energy Council that will monitor the development of the industry and make certain that all regions of Nova Scotia benefit from offshore resources.

One of Nova Scotia's most exciting opportunities is in the tourism and culture sectors, which continue to grow in leaps and bounds each year.

In the first eight months of this year, more than 690,000 people stopped at Tourist Information Centres across this province.

Having hit the \$1-billion-a-year mark, tourism is headed for \$1.5 billion. This government has set that as a tourism goal during its first mandate.

- This government recognized the importance of this industry—so key to the economic future of rural Nova Scotians—by establishing a separate Department of Tourism and Culture.
- This government will meet its commitment to build on the success of cultural industries by taking initiatives in the field of film and television production.

Infrastructure is critical to continued growth of the tourism industry and other sectors of the economy, especially in rural areas where visitors must travel by car or bus.

- This government will support the tourism industry by meeting its commitment to invest strategically in primary and secondary highway systems.
- This government will meet its commitment to increase highway funding in future budgets and to develop a 10-year road improvement plan based on need.
- This government's top priority in dealings with the federal government is a new federal-provincial highways cost-sharing agreement.

The island of Cape Breton has been forced to deal with harsh economic realities in the 1990s. That region of our province has experienced more hardship than any other.

- This government will honour its commitment to devolve the powers and authority of economic development to the community level so that decisions, including funding decisions, can be made at the local level.

This government realizes it does not hold a monopoly on good ideas, and it will listen intently to the ideas of Cape Bretoners themselves, as together we work to build a new and lasting economy for the future of the island.

- We will establish a committee to explore with industrial Cape Breton communities their vision of the economic future of their island and how government can best support them in turning that vision into reality.



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- This government, in consultation with the people of Cape Breton and other levels of government, will move forward with its commitment to initiate a long-term remediation plan for declining heavy industries.

Nova Scotians know that government cannot invent jobs; nor do loans and grants often buy jobs of lasting value. We have learned that lesson in the past and need not learn it again in the future.

This province has never had so many or such a wide variety of economic opportunities. Government's role is to help the private sector capitalize on that potential.

The government does have a role to play in helping to prepare Nova Scotians for the opportunities that lie just ahead.

Therefore, working in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College and Collège de l'Acadie, strategic public and private investments will ensure we develop the skills and the knowledge that Nova Scotians will need to participate fully in our more prosperous future.

This government believes that support for the fundamentals of our economy will allow the private sector to generate jobs that have a future.

Building Our Human Potential

While quality health care and a strong and vibrant economy are critical to this province's success in the 21st century, it is the skill, talent, and resourcefulness of Nova Scotians that will take us there.

Education holds the key. Every available tax dollar directed to the education of young Nova Scotians must help improve the learning opportunities of our students.

This opportunity must be provided in an equitable manner so that students themselves are the determining factor in their level of success.

- This government will meet its commitment to review the P3 construction and financing process to ensure that all future schools are built to a standard of quality that provides taxpayers with the maximum benefit for their tax dollars.
- We will meet our commitment to work with the Nova Scotia Community College to increase the number of training seats so that more Nova Scotians, and particularly young Nova Scotians, will have access to training that leads to employment.
- This government will proceed with its commitment to develop a code of conduct for students and teachers that recognizes and supports a respectful and healthy atmosphere of learning.
- This government will meet its commitment to review school board funding with the intention of providing long-term funding that allows greater flexibility in planning.

Nova Scotian teachers, together with Nova Scotian students, in a safe, healthy learning environment, will define our future success.

This government recognizes the important role of education and training in building strong Nova Scotian communities.

Strong communities also need to know that workers and volunteers engaged in the most crucial aspects of community life have the support of government.



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- This government will proceed with plans to assist continuing-care workers by providing new curriculum to upgrade their skills through the Nova Scotia Community College.
- We will recognize the valuable contribution of volunteer firefighters by meeting this government's commitment to move toward legislation that tangibly supports their dedication to their communities.

Nova Scotian seniors have contributed so much of their lives to their communities, and they have so much more to give through their experience, wisdom, and guidance.

- This government will recognize that contribution by fulfilling its commitment to help seniors remain in their homes. We will immediately amend the Senior Citizens' Financial Aid Act to extend the property tax rebate to more low-income seniors next year.
- This government will immediately meet its commitment to provide seniors with a strong voice through increased funding for the Senior Citizens' Secretariat.

Strong communities mean safe and secure communities for the young in our society. The young must be protected from those who would prey upon them.

- This government will immediately meet its commitment to allow for the apprehension of children involved in prostitution through legislative and policy changes in our justice and child protection systems.
- Adult prostitution is also a scourge on our communities and this government will immediately make good on its commitment to look for increased penalties for those who seek out prostitutes.
- We will introduce the Youth Pathways and Transition initiative through the high school curriculum to better meet the needs of at-risk students.

Those who do face hardships in their younger years must know that this government will not give up on them as long as they don't give up on themselves.

This government will immediately fulfil its commitment to move forward with a secure treatment facility for youth with severe behavioural problems who need treatment and secure care.

Building Better Government



Over the next four years this province will undergo many changes.

Government must lead the way by setting an example of openness and accountability. It must demonstrate that it respects and will be responsive to the wishes of the people.

This government recognizes the legitimate right of people to have access to the information upon which decisions are based.

- This government will respect that process by meeting its commitment to amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to offer a more secure term of office for the Review Officer.
- This government has and will continue to keep its commitment to give Nova Scotians a true picture of the state of the province's finances.

Sharing information must extend to those who are most affected by provincial laws governing privacy.

- This government will fulfil its commitment to amend existing legislation to improve access to adoption information for adult adoptees and birth parents.

This government will also extend to communities, whether they be cultural, geographic, linguistic, or "communities of interest," the respect due them by allowing proper input into critical decisions.

- We will move to honour our commitment to review existing school board boundaries where prior concerns have been raised over the process for assessing public input.

We are committed to developing a more inclusive relationship with Nova Scotia's Aboriginal peoples in finding resolutions to issues of ongoing concern.

Together we must find a means for protecting the natural resources of this province for future generations while recognizing the rights of all Nova Scotians to benefit from the land and sea.

- This government will move forward with its commitment to establish a process for meaningful dialogue in dealing with the Aboriginal peoples of this province.

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This government is committed to respecting the rights of its employees who provide service in a responsible and professional manner to Nova Scotians.

- We will immediately move to fulfil our commitment to implement the Ghiz Report and the Kaufman Report, which recognizes the important contribution of our Public Prosecution Service.

It is important that government continually earns the respect of the people by demonstrating our belief that capable work will be rewarded and that proper conduct by officials is mandatory.

- This government has, and will continue to implement, a policy of performance pay for senior officials that will reward effective performance by senior executives.
- This government will immediately honour its commitment to introduce and make public a Code of Conduct for members of the Executive Council and senior government employees, which sets clear standards for ethical behaviour.

This government is philosophically committed to removing itself as an unwanted intrusion into the lives of Nova Scotians where and when it can.

The government that remains will be a testament to our understanding that we are servants of the people.

This is a government determined to do—and do well—those things that are truly important to Nova Scotians.

We are guardians of their interests, bound by duty to respond to their needs and commanded by conscience to respect their will.

Building the Future

Nova Scotia's future has never been brighter.

This government is dedicated to ensuring we do not risk that future or fritter it away because this province is unwilling or unable to live within its means.

Our health care and educational systems are already jeopardized, not by program reviews or planned economies, but by a mounting debt that is nearing the \$10-billion mark.

Unless action is taken we will lose control of our own destiny, and our children will lose their right to make the choices that are still available to us.

We can, and together will, prevent that from happening.

- This government has kept its promise of smaller and more efficient government by reducing the size of Cabinet. It will continue that policy through reductions in non-essential government services.
- This government will move forward aggressively with its commitment to balance the budget, after undertaking a comprehensive review to help determine a rational, planned program of expenditure reduction.
- In the coming months we will also move towards creating a new and flexible work environment for our employees. We will offer them options to improve their family lives and make government a more efficient and cost-effective organization in the process.

This government is based on the firm belief that, just as we all share a future here in Nova Scotia, we also share in the responsibilities of the present.

God bless Nova Scotia.

God bless Canada.

God bless the Queen

